

FEB 1 1956

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EXCLUSIVELY YOURS

By BETTY BEALE



Prosperity in Social Life; Whole Town's Going Musical

Social life reflects the economic status of the times just as surely as the stock market or installment buying.

For instance, you can tell this year is plusher than last by two trends. One is that dinner parties are on the increase and cocktail parties on the decrease. Everybody knows that the cheapest way to pay back a lot of obligations is to invite everybody they can squeeze into one big cocktail to-do.

On the other hand, short of a dance, the most expensive way to entertain is the formal, seated dinner that only accommodates 10 or 20 of your friends at one time and each time there has to be new flowers, extra help, extra polishing, etc. Some of my friends inform me that contrary to past years a whole week will go by minus a cocktail party, whereas they seem to be dining out every night.

The other very noticeable trend is in party clothes. It used to be that every other woman at a black or white tie evening affair was gowned in black or perhaps navy. But this season all you see are the most fragile colors, the kind that can be worn twice or, with luck, three times before a \$7 to \$15 cleaning is required. Pastels are absolutely dominating the scene and practical black is practically out.

Society's Newest Fad

Now a new fad has hit the town. This is the greatest—but I haven't the faintest—if it's connected with the plushiest.

For some reason a creative surge is sweeping through Washington that may be society's answer to political primadonna-ing in election year.

The young marrieds have just gone into production of "Sweet Charity," the musical revue. F. Scott Fitzgerald's daughter, "Scotty" Lanahan, has written for the already sold-out multiple sclerosis dinner dance on March 9 at the Shoreham Hotel.

In close competition the post-debutante set has formed the Hexagon Club, which is so named, they say, because it is twice as good as the Triangle Show since, it includes girls. (No contradiction will come from this writer.)

They, too, will put on an original musical comedy—theirs for the benefit of the American Cancer Society on March 1, 2 and 3 at the Holton-Arms Auditorium.

Their patron list alone is staggering. Compiled by Priscilla Kenney, it is headed by honorary patrons Gen. and Mrs. George C. Marshall and goes on to the ambassadors of Norway, The Netherlands, Britain, France and Canada; also includes half the Cabinet, Senators Fulbright and Symington and their wives, Admiral and Mrs. Radford, Commissioner and Mrs. Spencer, and so on for a total of 50.

"Sweet Charity" staged its first rehearsal Monday night in the Lanahan's spacious home and with my own eyes and ears I saw and heard Assistant Secretary of Wel-

fare Roswell Perkins, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force David Smith and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Rod O'Connor sing love songs to Senorita del Terrificay Magnifica alias Dottie Kidder.

Just how the Eisenhower Administration got so much talent together in its younger echelons, I wouldn't know. But those boys can sing to me any time . . . Rod, who looks like Leslie Howard to begin with, can put on any accent from Washington civic sounds to strictly Georgetown tones. . . . Dottie has the foreign accent down cold and she has the clarity of enunciation and firmness of none other than Ethel Merman.

Most hysterical scene is when those two uninhibited women—Nancy Ordway Haight and Margaret McConihe—make a dive for hero Norman Paul. If there was ever a fellow who needed his wheaties, he was it. . . . Nancy, of course, is Washington's best comedienne. She's

not only been on the stage and taught dramatics but I am convinced she could be on Broadway any time she decided to walk on. . . .

The Hexagon Club

But to get back to the Hexagon Club. Their revue, the brainchild of Alice Lyon, Betty Berger, Nina Stuart and Allen MacInnis, will be a takeoff on radio's Monitor, will cover everything from Government to blues singing. Charlie Ilsley of the Milwaukee Ilsleys, an ex-Triangle man who has four months to kill before going around the world, is producing the show.

Mollie Holden, who is now directing "Hamlet" at Catholic University, will be stage manager; Bambi Stancioff is director; Mike Parsons and Bob Meehan, who are experts at footwork, are doing the choreography; Pete Hammer and Mimsie Holmes have written the skits and responsible for the music and lyrics are Tom

Lehrer, who has recorded an album of songs written while he was teaching at Harvard; Pat Cecil, writer of children's books; Mimi Mills and Dave Watson.

There are no two ways about it. This town is loaded with talent and it's not all on Capitol Hill. If you doubt it, take a look at a couple of professional writers who live quietly across the river in Arlington—the Douglass Wallops. She wrote bestseller "Sorry Wrong Number" that was made into a hit movie. He recently wrote "The Sunken Garden" and before that was the bestseller, "The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant" from which his and George Abbott's musical "Damn Yankees" sprung. The Wallops will give a party for the cast following the opening of the latter at the National Monday night.